



**Testimony of Scot X. Esdaile  
President, Connecticut NAACP State Conference**

**Connecticut General Assembly, Appropriations Committee  
General Government A Subcommittee**

**February 16, 2023**

Good evening, Chair Anwar, Chair Ryan, Ranking Members, and Members of the General Government A Subcommittee. My name is Scot X. Esdaile, and I am the President of the Connecticut NAACP State Conference. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

My purpose in testifying is to request that this Subcommittee allocate \$1.95 million to the Secretary of the State for the implementation and administration of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of Connecticut (“CTVRA”). I also encourage each of you to support this legislation.

The CTVRA—which the Government Administration and Elections Committee recently voted to raise as a committee bill—is a historic opportunity for Connecticut. Its provisions build upon the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 and state laws in New York, Virginia, Washington, Oregon, and California to bring the “state of the art” in voting rights protections to Connecticut. In brief, the CTVRA will:

- Launch a “preclearance” program requiring places with discriminatory records to prove that proposed voting changes will not harm voters of color before they can go into effect.
- Provide efficient legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules in court.
- Strengthen state-law protections against voter intimidation, deception, or obstruction.
- Expand language assistance for voters with limited English proficiency.
- Establish a central, public database for election and demographic information that will increase transparency and facilitate best practices in election administration.

Two of the CTVRA’s components—the preclearance program and the public database of election information—will require budgetary allocations to the Secretary of the State for staffing and software costs. Over the two-year budget cycle, these costs are an estimated \$1,948,226.

I encourage you to allocate \$1.95 million and fully fund the CTVRA. By doing so, this Subcommittee can pave the way for Connecticut to turn the page on a past replete with unequal barriers to the franchise and step forward as a beacon for voting rights and racial justice.

The late Congressman John R. Lewis, whose heroism on Bloody Sunday led to the federal Voting Rights Act’s passage, described the right to vote as “precious, almost sacred.” A budgetary impact of less than \$2 million is a small price to pay to protect that precious, sacred right. I encourage you to allocate this funding and make a critical investment in Connecticut’s democracy.